



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **DRUG SHIPMENT ORGANIZER SENTENCED TO 17 YEARS IN PRISON**

*Eastside man at center of drug probe that led to prison terms for two lawyers*

SEATTLE – An Eastside man at the center of a drug probe that has already led to prison terms for two local defense attorneys was sentenced to 17 years in prison today for conspiracy to distribute cocaine and marijuana.

In addition to the prison time, Robert V. Kesling, 27, was also sentenced to five years of supervised release by U.S. District Judge Ricardo S. Martinez. At the sentencing, Judge Martinez told Kelsing “these amounts of drugs are very high, even by federal court standards.”

The charges against Kelsing stem from an investigation by the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CID).

Kesling pleaded guilty in September to taking delivery of large shipments of cocaine and assisting in shipping that cocaine to Canada. In addition, Kelsing took delivery of 100 pound shipments of marijuana from Canada, and assisted in distributing the marijuana in the United States. The cocaine and marijuana were stored at various locations, including a residence in Woodinville, Washington, controlled by Kesling and others. On February 28, authorities seized suitcases containing 149-kilogram bricks of cocaine from a vehicle in Monroe, Washington. The cocaine, valued at \$34 million, was intended by Kesling for delivery to Canada. In March, agents recovered 1,450 pounds of packaged marijuana with an estimated street value of more than \$1 million from the Woodinville residence.

“This case is representative of ICE's commitment to disrupt and deter international narcotics smuggling activity,” said Leigh Winchell, special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in Seattle. “It is also indicative of our overall law enforcement effort to safeguard our communities. ICE's goal is to identify and dismantle criminal organizations like this one that seek to profit from their illicit activities.”

In their sentencing memo to the court, prosecutors say Kesling was responsible for hundreds of kilos of cocaine going north to Canada, and thousands of pounds of marijuana being imported into the United States. “Kesling was the one who knew the sources of supply for the cocaine in California and Mexico...Kesling was the one they all trusted, and Kesling was the one they relied on to insure the success of their operations in the Western District of Washington.”

As part of his guilty plea, Kesling agreed to forfeit a boat, a 2005 Dodge Ram truck, a 2004 Lexus, two Harley Davidson motorcycles, computer equipment, a 36-inch flat screen television, jewelry, over \$250,000 cash, a utility trailer, and numerous firearms, including several handguns.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*